

## **BUSINESS EMPLOYEES' SKILLS TRAINING (BEST) PROGRAM**

The Business Employees' Skills Training (BEST) program was established by the Wisconsin Legislature to help small businesses in industries that are facing severe labor shortages upgrade the skills of their workforce. Under the BEST program, Commerce can provide applicants with a tuition reimbursement grant to help cover a portion of the costs associated with training employees.

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### **ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS:**

Eligible applicants include Wisconsin for-profit businesses that have 25 or fewer full time employees or annual sales of less than \$2.5 million and are in one of the following Industrial Clusters:

- Automation
- Agriculture/Food Products
- Biotechnology
- Information Technology
- Manufacturing
- Medical Devices
- Paper/Forest Products
- Printing
- Tourism
- Childcare (does not include in-home childcare)

### **ELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES:**

Only costs incurred to train full-time employees are eligible.

### **ELIGIBLE PROJECT COSTS:**

Eligible project costs are limited to tuition costs for courses that are directly related to the employee's work requirements.

Note: All training must be provided by a qualified independent third party that is acceptable to COMMERCE.

### **INELIGIBLE PROJECT COSTS:**

- Costs incurred to train part-time and/or seasonal employees.
- Costs incurred prior to Commerce making a formal funding decision.

### **MATCH REQUIREMENT:**

Applicants will be required to provide a cash match of **at least 25%** of the Eligible Project Costs.

### **FUNDING AVAILABILITY:**

The maximum funding available is 75% of Eligible Project Costs not to exceed \$1,000 per full-time employee trained and \$5,000 per business.

### **UNDERWRITING CRITERIA:**

Given the limited funds available, projects are awarded on a competitive basis. Although Commerce can provide up to 75% of Eligible Project Costs, the actual level of participation, if any, is determined by an analysis of the following:

- Whether the business is in an Industrial Cluster.
- The wage level and benefit package provided to the employee being trained in relation to the cost of the training.
- The impact the training will have on the applicant's business operations.
- Viability of the applicant.
- Qualifications of the trainer.
- Whether the business is located in a Development Zone.
- Availability of funds.

### **THE APPLICATION PROCESS:**

Applications may be obtained by contacting Commerce's Business Development Assistance Center at:

**1-800 HELP-BUS (1-800-435-7287)**  
**or by accessing Commerce's website at:**  
**[www.commerce.state.wi.us](http://www.commerce.state.wi.us)**

The applicant will complete the application manual and submit it to Commerce for review by a Business Finance Specialist. The Business Finance Specialist will underwrite the project and make a funding recommendation. The applicant will receive a decision in approximately 15 business days from Commerce's receipt of a **complete** application. **Incomplete applications will be withdrawn from consideration for funding.**

If the grant is approved, the applicant will enter into a contract with Commerce that details the terms and conditions of the award.

## INFORMATION ON TRAINING PROGRAMS:

Although there are numerous eligible training providers within the state of Wisconsin, Commerce recommends that you first contact your local technical college or Small Business Development Center. These entities can help you identify and develop a training program that will adequately meet your needs.

### **SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER LOCATIONS AND PHONE NUMBERS**



|                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| UW-Eau Claire SBDC    | Phone: 715/836.5811 |
| UW-Green Bay SBDC     | Phone: 920/496.9010 |
| UW-La Crosse SBDC     | Phone: 608/785.8782 |
| UW-Madison SBDC       | Phone: 608/263.7680 |
| UW-Milwaukee SBDC     | Phone: 414/227.3240 |
| UW-Oshkosh SBDC       | Phone: 800/232.8939 |
| UW-Parkside SBDC:     |                     |
| Kenosha County        | Phone: 262/697.4525 |
| Racine County         | Phone: 262/638.1713 |
| UW-Platteville SBDC   | Phone: 608/342.1038 |
| UW-River Falls SBDC   | Phone: 715/425.0620 |
| UW-Stevens Point SBDC | Phone: 715/346.3838 |
| UW-Superior SBDC      | Phone: 715/394.8351 |
| UW-Whitewater SBDC    | Phone: 262/472.3217 |
| State Office          | Phone: 608/263.7794 |

### **WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM LOCATIONS AND PHONE NUMBERS**



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|----------------------|---------------------|
| Blackhawk            | Phone: 608/758.6900 |
| Chippewa Valley      | Phone: 715/833.6200 |
| Fox Valley           | Phone: 920/735.5645 |
| Gateway              | Phone: 262/564.2200 |
| Lakeshore            | Phone: 920/693.8213 |
| Madison Area         | Phone: 608/246.6100 |
| Mid-State            | Phone: 715/422.5300 |
| Milwaukee Area       | Phone: 414/297.6600 |
| Moraine Park         | Phone: 800/472.4554 |
| Nicolet Area         | Phone: 715/365.4410 |
| Northcentral         | Phone: 715/675.3331 |
| Northeast Wisconsin  | Phone: 920/498.5700 |
| Southwest Wisconsin  | Phone: 800/362.3322 |
| Waukesha County      | Phone: 877/463.9282 |
| Western Wisconsin    | Phone: 800/322.9982 |
| Wisconsin Indianhead | Phone: 800/243.9482 |